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# State of Utah

## Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 15, 2016

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### **UTAH JUVENILE JUSTICE WORKING GROUP RELEASES RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND PROMOTE BETTER PUBLIC SAFETY OUTCOMES**

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – The Utah Juvenile Justice Working Group today submitted to state leaders a comprehensive set of data-driven policy recommendations designed to increase public safety, effectively hold juvenile offenders accountable, and focus juvenile justice system resources on youth who pose the greatest risk to public safety. The group's recommendations will be used as the foundation for statutory, budgetary, and administrative changes during the 2017 legislative session.

The 19-member, inter-branch Working Group was appointed in June by state leadership from all three branches of government. After conducting an exhaustive assessment of the juvenile justice system over six months, the Working Group issued a set of consensus-based policy recommendations. Collectively, these recommendations are projected to reduce the population of youth in out-of-home placements by 49 percent by 2022, producing millions in averted costs for reinvestment in a continuum of evidence-based options for the courts to strengthen families and hold youth accountable while keeping them in their own homes.

The Working Group conducted a data-driven, research-based analysis of the juvenile justice system, reviewing key juvenile justice data from the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Department of Human Services and collecting input through more than thirty roundtable discussions with stakeholders, including judges, law enforcement, prosecutors, families, and youth. The Working Group also reviewed current research on reducing reoffending as well as effective policies and practices from states across the country.

#### **Key findings of the Working Group include:**

- Although most youth enter the system as low risk, youth remain stalled in the system for long periods of time due to court-ordered conditions such as financial obligations.
- Youth who have never committed a felony make up a large portion of out-of-home placements, potentially increasing their risk to reoffend.



- Public safety outcomes for out-of-home placements are poor despite costing taxpayers up to 17 times more than supervising youth living in their family homes. Roughly half of youth released from state custody are convicted of another crime within two years.

The Working Group's final report and executive summary are available at [http://justice.utah.gov/ccjj\\_juvenile\\_justice\\_policy\\_study.html](http://justice.utah.gov/ccjj_juvenile_justice_policy_study.html).

The inter-branch Working Group includes:

- Sen. J. Stuart Adams, Senate District 22
- Steve Anjewierden, Chief of Police Services, Unified Police Department
- Susan Burke, Director, Division of Juvenile Justice Services, Utah Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Charri Brummer, Deputy Director, Division of Child and Family Services, DHS
- Darin Carver, Clinical Practice Administrator, Weber Human Services
- Judge Ryan Evershed, 8<sup>th</sup> District Juvenile Court
- Maria Garciaz, Executive Director, NeighborWorks Salt Lake
- Ron Gordon, Executive Director, Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice
- Carolyn Hansen, Director, Salt Lake County Division of Youth Services
- Judge Michelle Heward, 2<sup>nd</sup> District Juvenile Court
- Rep. Eric Hutchings, House District 38
- Steve Kaelin, Alternative and Adult Education Specialist, Utah State Board of Education
- Judge James Michie, 3<sup>rd</sup> District Juvenile Court
- Troy Rawlings, County Attorney, Davis County
- Dawn Marie Rubio, Utah Juvenile Court Administrator
- Rep. Lowry Snow, House District 74
- Doug Thomas, Director, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, DHS
- Pam Vickrey, Executive Director, Utah Juvenile Defender Attorneys
- Sen. Todd Weiler, Senate District 23

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